

REMARKS

Applicant has filed herewith a certified copy of the priority document, a petition for a two-month extension of time in which to respond to the Official Action of December 13, 2004, an information disclosure statement enclosing a copy of the reference set forth in the Background of the Invention of the application, and substitute claims.

Applicant advises as follows:

1. Amendments to the Specification are set forth in response to the Examiner's comments set forth in paragraph 1 of the detailed action. The correction at page 3 is a typographical correction. The Examiner's reference to a required correction at page 13, line 2 of the application is unclear inasmuch as applicant does not find a second occurrence of the word "the". A copy of page 13 of the application as submitted is enclosed for review by the Examiner.
2. Acceptance of the Information Disclosure Statement and Priority Document are respectfully requested.
3. The claims have been amended as indicated by the Examiner in Paragraph 6 of the Official Action. Amended Claim 1 corresponds to original Claim 2. Claim 19 corresponds to original Claim 20. New Claim 24 corresponds to original Claim 4. New Claim 40 corresponds to original Claim 6.


In view of the foregoing it is believed that all of the claims are in condition for allowance.

Passage to allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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[47] The coffer 10 is driven in the ground. Its burial may occur as a result of the coffer's own weight if it is relatively heavy and if the soil is sufficiently loose. Otherwise, an active vibratory ramming system is used in order to bear vertically down on the coffer.

[48] In order to minimize the disturbances of the soil in the burial phase of the coffer 10, the latter may be associated with linear guides 19, 20, for example of the type illustrated in Figure 3. In this example, these guides are two steel parts of U shaped cross section, with a spacing between its branches which is equal to that provided between the front and rear faces of the coffer 10. These guides 19, 20 are driven vertically into the ground on either side of the pipeline 1 with a spacing between them which is equal to that between the lateral faces 14, 15 of the coffer 10, the base of each U being directed outwards. The positioning of the linear guides buried in the ground is easier to carry out than where the rectangular coffer is concerned.

[49] Once the guides 19, 20 are buried to their positions, the coffer 10 is placed around them, as shown in Figure 3, and is then driven down, the front and rear faces 11, 12 sliding along the branches of the U shape of the guides.

[50] It will be noted that the steel plates forming the lateral faces 14, 15 of the coffer are optional. After the U guides 19, 20 have been buried, all that is necessary is to bury the steel plates forming the front and rear faces 11, 12 of this coffer.

[51] In the alternative embodiment illustrated in Figures 4 and 5, the linear guides are in the form of sheet piles 21 which are buried in succession, thereby assembling them into curtains which extend perpendicularly to the pipeline 1. Two sheet pile curtains having a spacing of the order of one meter between them are thus formed on either side of the pipeline in order to retain the sand. The front and rear faces of the coffer which are to overlap the pipeline are subsequently slid along the inner faces of these curtains.

[52] The interior of the excavation coffer 10 is accessible via its upper side. During or after the burial of the coffer into the position illustrated in Figures 6 and 7, the sand or other soil